

## **TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE: 28 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Customer Feedback Report 2020-21**

**Adult Statutory Complaint Report 2020-21**

**Children's Statutory Complaint Report 2020-21**

**Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2021.**

### **REPORT OF THE DELIVERY MANAGER FOR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP AND FINANCIAL WELFARE SERVICES**

#### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To update members on the Council's response to complaints between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 To provide assurance that the Council's response to complaints is effective and continuously improving.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Audit Committee review the Annual complaint and feedback reports for 2020/21 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Child Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback and also the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Review Letter 2021.

#### **3 SUMMARY**

- 3.1 The terms of reference of the Audit Committee include: '*Recognising that Complaints/Compliments are a Cabinet function, the Committee should Review the Annual Complaints Report and seek assurances that the Council is improving in response to complaints raised.*'
- 3.2 To demonstrate effective complaint handling the Council produces an annual report on complaint handling for Children's Statutory Complaints, Adult Statutory Complaints and Corporate Feedback and complaints. These reports can be found at appendices A, B and C.
- 3.3 In total there were just 491 complaints received across the Council in 2020/21 from a total of 473 complainants. There has been an overall reduction in the number of complaints received by 16%. This is against a backdrop of the many millions of service transactions that take place every week including 10.2 million refuse collections and 229,000 calls to our call centre each year including new services provided to support our residents during the most challenging of years due to the Covid Pandemic. The total number of complaints therefore remains an incredibly small proportion of our transactions at less than 0.005%.

### 3.4 Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A)

- 3.4.1 In the year 2020/21 there were 424 corporate stage one complaints received a 11% reduction on the number of complaints received in 2019/20. This is also the lowest number of complaints received in the previous 7 years.
- 3.4.2 Of the 424 complaints received, 29 were escalated to Stage two of the procedure. This is a 43% decrease on the number received in 2019/20.
- 3.4.3 Of the 424 Stage One complaints that have been completed, 42% (180) were partly or fully upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better, this is an improvement on the 43% (201) in 2019/20.
- 3.4.4 The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy states that Stage 1 Corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further 5 days. Overall, the Council is managing to respond to corporate complaints within an average of 12 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale.
- 3.4.5 82% of corporate complaints were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, an improvement on 81% achieved in 2019/20, there has been a sustained improvement since 2017/18.
- 3.4.6 Of the 29 Stage Two complaints 20 resulted in full investigations, this is a 43% decrease in the full Stage Two Investigations (35) completed in 2019/20. 40% of full investigations were upheld. The average number of days to complete a full investigation was 29 working days. This is an increase on the 24 days taken in 2019/20. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic did affect these timescales, however this figure is still within the extended timescale of 65 working days outlined in the complaint policy for stage two investigations.
- 3.4.7 All of the 180 complaints, where fault has been found, have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship Team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

Of the remedies recorded against Corporate Complaints in 2020/21;

- 25% were to provide an explanation and an apology.
  - 31% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
  - 14% was to provide an explanation and service was provided
  - 5% was to provide an apology and service was provided.
- 3.4.8 Some positive improvements resulting in learning from complaints include;
- The Financial Case Management client charging process has been updated, which will improve timescales
  - Procedures reviewed so there is better preparation and communication between social workers prior to meetings

- All officers who complete financial agreements now undertake a one year online course and also have to complete an induction programme, including training to the required competency
- Contactors have been reminded of the standards expected in relation to sightlines at junctions to ensure that, when signs are installed, they do not obstruct them
- New proof of residency procedures for Revenues Enforcement agents have been implemented

3.4.9 In 2020/21 there was a 35% increase in the Positive Feedback received. Receiving a total of 392 instances of positive feedback in 2020/21, when compared to 290 in 2019/20.

### 3.5 **Adult Statutory Complaint Report** (Appendix B)

3.5.1 We received 38 Adult Statutory complaints between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, a 34% decrease on the 58 received in 2019/20. The lowest number received in 5 years.

3.5.2 Of the 38 complaints completed, 69% (26) were upheld.

3.5.3 We aim to respond to all Adult Statutory complaints within 25 working days, because of the nature and complexity of some issues it may take longer, and complainants will be informed if this is the case. The time scales may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. In 2020/21 the average number of days to respond to an Adult Statutory complaint across all portfolios was 53 days and increase on 51 working days achieved in 2019/20. There has been a significant improvement in timescales since October 2020, which has seen the average number of days reduce to 32 during the last two quarters of 2020/21.

3.5.4 Of the remedies recorded against Adult Statutory Complaints in 2020/21;

- 37% were to provide an explanation and an apology.
- 16% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
- 16% was to improved service provision.

3.5.5 Some positive improvements that have resulted from learning from complaints include;

- There is now a specialist commissioning framework for providers to autistic people, Mental Health services and Learning Disability services
- Hospital discharges are now supported at weekends
- A Specialist Housing Strategy for accessible housing for people with disabilities has been developed
- The development of accessible information for Mental Health services

### 3.6 Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C)

3.6.1 We received 29 Children's statutory complaints in 2020/21 a 42% decrease on the 50 received in 2019/20. All were dealt with at Stage One, with only four progressing to an independent Stage Two investigation. No Stage 3 panels were completed in 2020/21.

3.6.2 Of the 29 complaints completed in the year, 52% (15) of the complaints were upheld.

3.6.3 The Children's Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, outlines, how Child Statutory Complaints should be handled and the three stages for Child Statutory Complaints.

Stage One should be an opportunity to resolve the complaint at service level, this should be done within 10 working days, which may be extended to 20 working days in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement with the customer.

Stage Two is an Independent Investigation which should be completed within 25 working days and this can be extended to 65 working days in more complex cases.

Stage Three is a panel where the investigation at Stage One and Two is reviewed.

3.6.4 The average time scale for all Children's Statutory Stage One Complaints was 23 working days, which exceeds the timescales outlined in the regulations. A review of procedure has taken place and as a result there is a clear improvement since November 2020, where complaints were responded to in an average of 17 working days.

3.6.5 During 2020/21, 4 (14%) Statutory Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. All were investigated and Independent persons commissioned. The average number of days to complete a Stage Two Investigation was 66 working days which is an increase on the 37 days in 2019/20. Time scales were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the availability of complaints to meeting investigators.

3.6.6 Of the remedies recorded against Children's Statutory Complaints in 2020/21;

- 45% were to provide an explanation and apology
- 14% were to provide an explanation and no remedy was required
- 14% were to provide information
- 10% were to provide an explanation and a service was provided

3.6.8 Some positive improvements that have resulted from learning from complaints include;

- Individual remedies have been completed regarding support plans and working agreements, assessments and contact.
- Officers have been reminded regarding the expectation that minutes are provided from meetings.
- We are now using Parent and Baby placements more consistently with high levels of wrap around support to parents during the Mental Health assessment process.
- High levels of training and development has been given to social workers around the impact of domestic violence so that the appropriate support can be offered to survivors.

### 3.7 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2021** (Appendix D)

- 3.7.1 During 2020/21 a total of 22 complaints were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, in addition to this 12 detailed investigations remained open on 31 March 2020.
- 3.7.2 During the year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made the decision that 2 complaints were premature and decided not to further investigate 15 complaints. 6 complaints were referred for a detail investigation and a decision has yet to be made on these cases. There were 9 detailed investigations completed in 2020/21, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirm that there was fault in 8 of these cases.
- 3.7.3 In all cases where fault was found the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was satisfied that we had successfully implemented their recommendations. In two cases the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council has provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached them.
- 3.7.4 In each upheld case the Council has taken learning forward to improve practices in relation to the faults identified, apologies have also been given to customers in these cases.

## 4 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Appendix A- Customer Feedback Report (Corporate) 2020-21
- Appendix B- Adult Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2020-21
- Appendix C- Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2020-21
- Appendix D- LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2021